SPORTSWOMEN: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES (A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF AGRA DISTRICT OF UTTAR PRADESH)

Synopsis

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INTRODUCTION

Sport is a physical and social phenomena, whereas men and women actively participate and they intend to participate in a specific event or sport. Men are participating in such events with more enthusiasm but women are lagging behind due to some socio-cultural reasons. Sport and gender equality are interrelated in different manners. Sport is a social and cultural activity in which social constructions of masculinity and femininity play a key role (Council of Europe, 2023). The positive outcomes of sport for gender equality and women's empowerment are constrained by gender-based discrimination in all areas and at all levels of sport and physical activity, fuelled by continuing stereotypes of women's physical abilities and social roles. Women are frequently segregated involuntarily into different types of sports, events and competitions specifically targeted to women. Women's access to positions of leadership and decision-making is constrained from the local level tothe international level. The value placed on women's sport is often lower, resulting in inadequate resources and unequal wages and prizes. In the media, women's sport is not only marginalized but also often presented in a different style that reflects and reinforces gender stereotypes, violence against women, exploitation and harassment in sport are manifestations of the perceptions of men's dominance, physical strength and power, which are traditionally portrayed in male sport (United Nations, 2007). Although there is no doubt that for the last two centuries, positive efforts have been made for women in sports by organizations, acts and policies enacted at national and international levels, even today gender disparities persist in all areas of sports.

Historical Overview of Women’s Participation in Sports

Women's participation in sport has a long history. It is a history marked by division and discrimination but also one filled with major accomplishments by female athletes and important advances for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (United Nations, 2007).

Historically, in the late 17th century, the educational committees of the French Revolution (1789) included intellectual, moral, and physical education for both girls and boys. But with the victory of Napoleon less than twenty years later, physical education was reduced to military preparedness for boys and men (Arnd, 2003). In the modern era, the First Olympic Games (1896) were not open for women. It was argued that sports are harmful to women's health, especially reproductive health. The founder of International Olympic Committee Pierre de Coubertin described that women's sports "impractical, uninteresting, unaesthetic, and we are not afraid to add: incorrect". As more women desired to engage in physical activities, they became more competitive. Women began to participatein the modern Olympics after 1900. It was only after the influence

of the suffrage movement in the first wave of feminism that women began to participate in more competitive sports on a regular basis.Women first time participated in the Olympic Games in Paris in 1900, with 22 women competing intennis and golf.

International Perspective

Before the late 19th and early 20th centuries, only a few women competed in sports in Europe and North America. In 1972 the United States Congress passed the Title IX legislation as a part of the additional Amendment Act to the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Steiner, 1995). Title IX states that: "no person shall on the basis of sex, be excluded from participating in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance" (Greenberg, 1997). In the Olympic Games (1992), out of a total of 257 events, there were86 women's events, in which 28.8% women participated. In the Olympic Games (2000), a total of 300 events were held, in which 120 were women's events and 38.2% of the participants were women.And in the Olympic Games held in 2012, out of total 302 events, only 140 women's events were organized, in which 44.2% women participants were included (International Olympic committee, 2014). Although Title IX has led to an increase in women's participation in sports, there has not beena similar push for women in coaching or other managerial positions in sports. According to Title IX and Athletic Statistics (2011), within collegiate sports positions by gender, only 42.4% of women's teams were led by a female head coach. And the athletic directors' positions were held by women at 18.6% compared to men at 81.4%. According to 2016 data, 33% of Women National Basketball Association (WNBA) teams are led by women coaches or managers. And the International Olympic Committee also consists of 20% female members (Senne, 2016). Maintaining the "Gender Balanced"sports theme of Tokyo Olympics 2020, some countries like China, U.S.A., Australia, Great Britain and Russia saw a large number of female athletes (47.8%) participating (Chauhan, 2021).

Indian Perspective

Gender inequality is one of the major problems of Indian society and it focus sports women players challenges before women to participate in public sphere including sports. It is considered difficult for women to participate in sports, due to male dominance, socio-cultural values in society. There are clear pictures of the status of popular sports among women in the Vedic and epic periods. Indian sports women face several problems like subservient image of women in the mainstream mindset, patriarchal social system, caste discrimination, poverty, traditional role of women in family & society,lack of facilities and no organized efforts or connection with the women's movement. Over the years,women have faced challenges such as

participation, decision making, recognition, lack of access to resources, limited opportunities, gender biasness and social stereotypes in Indian sports, which discourage their participation in sports. According to the Indian Olympic Association (2016), in the Summer Olympic Games, 0-4 numbers of Indian women from 1900-1976; 4-10 women from 1984- 1996, and 19-54 women competed from 2000-2016. Recently, 44% of Indian women (56 female outof 124) and 56% of men competed at the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020. While the participation of women in China, America, Australia, Gate Britain, Canada, and Russia countries was seen equivalentto that of men (Chauhan, 2021). Although recent years have seen an increase in the number of female athletes in the sports industry such as badminton, tennis, shooting, archery, boxing, athletics, weightlifting and wrestling, there is still along way to go for Indian women.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Sports: According to Sport Sociologist **Harry Edwards (1973),** "Sport" derives its root meaning from "disport," meaning "to divert oneself." It carried the original implication of people diverting theirattention from the rigors and pressures of daily life by participating in the mirth and whimsy of frolic-some physical activity.

According to Jean Harvey and **Hart Cantelon (1988),** "Sport is primarily a social activity, and thesports problems that the media report on every day are essentially social problems. It is a set of socialstructures and practices whose orientations and objectives have been adopted or challenged from theway beginning by various social agents."

According to the Council of Europe, European Sports Charter (1992), "Sport" means all forms ofphysical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.

The United Nations (2003) has defined "sport" as a means of promoting education, health, development and peace that "... all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play; recreation; organized, casual or competitive sport; and indigenous sports or games."

According to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (India, 2021-22), "Sports and games havealways been seen as an integral component in the all-round development of the human personality. Apart from being a means of entertainment and physical fitness, sports have also played a great role in generating the spirit of healthy competition and bonding within the community."

Sport as a social institution

As a social institution, sport offers values and norms, roles, socialization models and organizational forms. According to Craig (2016), these values and norms originate from the social and cultural conditions of 19th-

century Britain. The regulations are particularly clear in organized sport, where behavior is organized into social roles, with many of these perceived as an obligation or function by the people in these roles (official, coach, etc.).

Why study sport in society?

There are several reasons to study the sport in society. Some of these are as follows:

- Sport is a part of people's lives,
- Sport is connected with important ideas and meanings in life, and
- Sport is connected to major spheres of social life (Serra, 2015).

Sportswomen: A woman's acceptable role in society is that of a mother and a wife and when a woman rises from these traditional roles, she faces an uphill task in proving herself. As such, a sportswoman has to fight much more than a sports man as she not only has to fight for her place in the team but also fight for her right to be a sportswoman.

Herbert Spencer (1894) distinguished in his book “Education, Intellectual, Moral and Physical”, theway physical education was looked at in a girls and boys school in his times. He describes the boys playground as an “open graveled space with ample room for sports and exercises”, while the girls school playground had laid out "grim-grass plots, gravelwalk, shrubs and flowers, with absolutely no chance for any physical recreation". Spencer, points out that the reason behind this difference is the way society defined the role of a woman and how sports was perceived to diminish a feminine exterior. Spencer stated, “women developing a robust physique is undesirable, and rude health and abundant figures are considered plebeian".

Indian women and female players are also discouraged due to some social concerns prevalent in Indian society like **"Nobody wants to marry an athlete"** and **"She has developed muscles like that of a man. There is nothing feminine about her." Snyder and Spreitzer (1978)** stated in theirstudy that women athletes find themselves under social pressure to reduce their sports participation and conform to traditional female role stereotypes. **Outiler and San (1983)** reported that after the introduction of the Olympic Games, women's participation in sports increased, but there was still a lack of participation among women due to socio-cultural barriers. As a social system**,** it is importantfor the sport sociologist to find out why individuals get involved in sports? What impact does this participation have on the way of life and how sports activities are affected by religion, socio- economic status and gender etc ?

If we consider sports as a microcosm of society**.** And we determine that sport teams are mirrors of society, so we see a similarity between society and sport. Thus we should engage with social issues like-

discrimination, inequality, naxalism and homophobia which come up in sports and society. Sportoffers a valuable channel to strengthen women's and girls' capabilities and provide information on important social issues, such as health, HIV/AIDS and women's rights. According to UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, in Article (1), "The practice of physical education and sport is a fundamental right for all".

Sports and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Women play an integral role in the achievement of each MDGs, and each MDGs is key to gender equality. Each of the MDGs' goals provides an overview of the growing role of sports activities, in which Goal 2 to Goal 5 mainly help in empowering women.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education. Sports and activities and physical education make school more attractive and improve their attendance.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women. Involving girls in sports activities along with boys helps in removing prejudices.

Goal 4 and 5: Reduce child mortality and improve maternal health. Sports help in providing a healthy lifestyle to women.

Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri Anurag Thakur (2022) informed that a component ofthe **Khelo India Scheme 'Sports for Women'** is dedicated to promoting sports participation especially among women. Under the Khelo India scheme, 1374 female athletes are being trained in the country under the 'Talent Search and Development' component and every athlete is getting Rs 6,28,400 (Rs 1,20,000 as out of pocket allowance every year) maximum financial assistance is beingprovided. With special emphasis on promoting sports among talented women players in the country, atotal of 3146 women athletes are trained across the country under the sports promotion schemes of Sports Authority of India (SAI).

Opportunities: Women stand to gain specific social benefits from participation in sport and physicalactivity. Sport provides women and girls with an alternative avenue for participation in the social andcultural life of their communities and promotes enjoyment of freedom of expression, interpersonal networks, new opportunities and increased self-esteem. It also expands opportunities for education and for the development of a range of essential life skills, including communication, leadership, teamwork and negotiation.

Challenges: For last decades, men athletes have had multiple opportunities to play for championshipsbut, women athletes were required to play in an organization catered for only women's sports. This status changed when many women defied odds and made athletics possible for girls. There are still many challenges for

women's athletic organizations. For example women have to go through many obstacles in order to succeed including the wage gap, recognition, body shaming, and television coverage etc.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Functional Perspective

The functional theory looks at how sport contributes to the smooth functioning, stability and social progress in organizations, communities and societies. **McPherson, Curtis and Loy (1989)** believe that "all groups strive to maintain the social order, and that sport can facilitate this process". Women can combat deviations through participation in sports and specific programs of personal development and build values. Following Parsons' social system theory, **Craig (2016)** argues that the everyday activities in sport can help to reinforce the functionally important social rules of a society. Sport has a variety of functions "that aid the process of social reproduction". The functionalist views sports as learning practices that strengthen and extend the learning that occurs in other situations. Sport leads in order to teach important rules, hard work, well organized organization and an efficient authority structure to those who watch or play. It is also served as tension management function in the society by enforcing both the spectators and participants with a channel for aggressive energy. A functionalist approach also shows how sport acts as a means to bring the people together and endorse the feeling of unity, an idea of social identification as well as a source of identity of individuals (Caokley, 1984).

Conflict Perspective

The conflict theory asserts that society is shaped by economic forces and that sports must be studied in terms of capitalist expansion and economic exploitation. Sociologists often use this theory to throw light upon how sports perpetuate the privilege and power of the existing elite group within society. The people who hold the economic power use that power to coerce and manipulate others to accept their view of the world as the correct view. This means that those who use this theory are concerned with class relations. The social order exists because all people do not have access to equal resources. Thus conflict theorists see sport as a means of promoting capitalism in society, as a set of activities and spectacles that reduce awareness of economic exploitation among those without the power while maintaining the privilege and position of those who control wealth and the economy. **Jennifer Hargreaves (1990)** sees three political strategies for women in sports- (1) Co-option: In this strategy, liberal feminists believe women will gradually take over more roles within sport created and controlled by men, (2) Separatism: Position held by radical feminists, which advocates self-realization through organization of sport events and governing bodies independent of men, and (3)

Cooperation: It posits that men are not inherently oppressive, but are socialized into reproducing oppressive roles.

Feminist Perspective

Feminist theory has grown out of a general dissatisfaction and frustration that intellectual traditions based knowledge on the values, experiences and insights of men and ignore or devalue those of women. Feminist studies focused on how sports reproduce gendered ideas and practices related to sexuality, physicality and the body. Sociologists use this theory to study how different sports help toproduce ideas of masculinity and femininity and how women are represented in media sports coverage. Feminist theorists also take social action by challenging those aspects of sports that systematically privilege men over women (Caokley, 2001). Sport, in turn, is regarded as a set of gendered activities based on masculine values and experiences. Feminists are interested in researching how sport reproduces patriarchy through physicality, sexuality and the body, how women are mis/represented in media coverage of sport and how women can use strategies to resist or challenge dominant gender ideology. Feminists use sports as sites of empowerment of women and promote forms of sport that reflect women's interests.

Interactionist Perspective

The interactionist theory focuses on how people's identities are created and maintained due to participation and interaction with sports and cultures. Sociologists studying sports through this perspective aim to make sports associations less autocratic, more democratic and condemn the hierarchical organization of sports. However, this theory ignores issues of power relations in societyby choosing to look at society from a micro-scale (Coakley 2001). According to the interactionist theory, society is created through social interaction. It studies sport through the meanings and symbols that people create through social interactions. People use these meanings to make decisionsin their everyday lives, which also govern their involvement in sport. Interactionist theorists are interested in researching how individuals experience sport and how identities are created through the social processes of becoming, being and unbecoming an athlete. In turn, the interactionist theory is often used when people study the experiences of athletes and their relationships with others, and theways in which athletes make sense of their participation in sport.

Cultural Studies/Perspective

The struggle between gender and culture exists primarily with regard to women in the area of the feminine because cultural practices and sport are defined by male-dominated perspectives (Hall, 1996). Especially in the recent era, debating gender issues in sport has generated some remarkable milestones for female athletes

such as changing public attitudes toward women's sport and their participation, expanding and promoting women's professional sport. **Hall (1996)** suggested that sportstudies scholars adopt a cultural studies approach in order to explore relations of power in sport which are based on constructs of race, gender, sexuality, and class. **Davis (1997)** presented how the swimsuit issues of Sports Illustrated which symbolize the male dominated perspective or masculine sports marketing influences into understanding and defining the women's body image in American society. Women's sports are less covered by news than male sports. During sporting events, the camera focuses specifically on attractive women.

Gatekeeping Theory

Gatekeeping theory (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) have aided sport sociologists in explaining the myriadways sport media (re)produce power in ways that privilege men. **Kane's (2005)** assertion that "the media" ignore women in sport, gatekeeping theory also helps us understand who comprises "the media" and how those decision-makers and individuals in positions of power shape who and what iscovered. In sum, a large majority of the sport media "gatekeepers" are men. Gatekeeping theory organizes those controls in levels, ranging from macro (societal, systems) to micro (individual).

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE CONCEPT

Sports: A formal sociological definition of sport is a physical activity which is fair (fair meaning honest in that the contest is structured for all contestants to have a reasonable chance to win), competitive, non-deviant, and is guided by rules, organization and/or tradition.

Sportswomen: A woman who practice or is skilled in sport, and who take part in sports, especially someone who is very good at them.

Opportunities: An opportunity of achieving a positive result during a match, such as dismissing abatsman in cricket or scoring a goal in association football.

Challenges: An invitation to take part in a sporting contest, especially to a reigning champion.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Edwards (1973)** analyzed the social, political, and economic implications of sports in American society. The book also discussed the processes and tensions within the institution of sports and the many forces influencing the current state and future prospects of American society as a whole. Edwards explained the state of exclusion and segregation based on gender in sports in American society. He said that of course, women have not been completely excluded from sportsin America. But it is clear that they have been pushed into secondary roles in certain types of sports and so-called major

sports. The author described how sports are referred to as major cult values in American society. In which it is expected that women should be excluded from primarylevel participation (e.g. as coaches, managers and athletes) in major sports. And while women are encouraged to participate in sports at a primary level, such sporting activities are placed within the context of appropriate behavior patterns for women.

- **Tews and Pfister (2003)** in their book analyzed the socio-cultural characteristics of the countriesof North-South America, Middle-East Asia, Oceania, Africa, Western, Eastern Europe and deep understanding of social issues related to women and sports. The book also highlighted the analytical background of international and comparative research and the relevance of the theoretical framework to the constructivist gender studies approach. In terms of methods,framework and guidelines, the authors explained that the theoretical background of Judith Lorber's gender theory was chosen to guide the analysis and crosscultural comparison of the status of women in sport, across national boundaries. The authors questioned whether women arestill marginalized in sports? Are there any countries where the number of women active in sportsis the majority? Because in many countries around the world and at all stages of history, womenhave played a distinct but often marginal role in traditional sports, dances, and physical-activities.
- **Bailey, Wellard and Dismore (2004)** in their research paper, described the benefits, patterns and impacts of girls' participation in sports and physical activities. The authors summarized a series of empirical research studies on girls' participation in sports and physical activities in countries such as Senegal, UK, USA, Australia, Canada, Portugal, Spain, etc. In which it was discussed that physical activity frees girls from harmful health habits, reduces the risk of mental depression,pregnancy, sexual dysfunction and various types of diseases. The paper reported that the disparitybetween physical activity levels and behavior of boys and girls tends to decrease with increasingage. The authors hypothesized that girls are less active than boys in all aspects of sports and physical activity, placing them at increased risk for sedentary lifestyles (during childhood) and poor health during adolescence. In relation to age, the authors noted that age is a majordeterminant of physical activity, with sport and physical activity beginning to decline among girlsaged 11 or 12. Because they increasingly come into contact with the effects of socialization of gender ideology.
- **Choudhary (2005)** in an analytical study, explored the influential factors of parental environment in the participation of women in Indian sports. The objective of the study was to find out the influence of

parental environment on female postgraduate students of selected Indian universities on their participation in sports and to highlight family status as an essential factor forwomen's participation in sports. In this study, 600 female postgraduate students were selected from 26 universities from four regions of India on the basis of random samples at the Inter University Youth Festival organized by Andhra Pradesh University during the academic year 2004–05. The statistical techniques like Chisquare, ANOVA and T-ratio were used to analyze the collected data. The study found that factors like parents' environment, parents' monthly income, their educational qualification, occupation, and religion etc. cannot influence women's participation in sports.

- **The United Nations (2007)** produced a report on some key topics regarding women, gender inequality and sports in order to support the goals of the Beijing Declaration and the platform fortheir action. The report described the benefits of participation in sports to sports, society, womenand girls. Which states that participation in sports and physical activity at all levels leads to freedom from barriers such as gender-based, gender discrimination and gender inequalities. It also explained the media, its biases, violence against women, exploitation, sexual harassment anddress related aspects on women's participation in sports. The report promotes the participation and empowerment of women and girls in sports in countries such as South America, Hungary, Malaysia, Pakistan and India. The report discussed the manifestations of women and girls in sports in the context of the Indian perspective. In which a study conducted by Indira Gandhi Institute of Physical Education and Sports Sciences on the attitudes of parents, teachers and coaches towards women and girls in rural-urban communities was told that there is a need to support and protect women's participation in sports. There is a need for policies at the local level.
- **Sangwan (2008)** in a case study, explained the role and important contribution of women playersof Haryana state in sports. The researcher used exploratory structured questionnaire and focusedinterview schedule methods to collect data from female players. The study identified theobstacles faced by female players to participate in sports. The researcher explained how the negative image of sports and female athletes plays a role as a barrier to their participation in sports activities. In the study, suggestions related to some effective measures to be taken at the society and state level to encourage collective participation of women were presented. Apart from this, the focus of current sports towards pro-people orientation was also highlighted.

- **Dixon, Warner and Bruening (2008)** in their qualitative study, described insights into the role of both parents and the interactive and contextual nature of socialization for women's lifelong sport participation. 17 female main funds of the Association National Division of Sports Universities America were selected as participants in the study. The authors explored work-life balance and gender in athletic departments and sampled women with long-term participation in rowing, volleyball, soccer, lacrosse, tennis, basketball, and gymnastics sports. The study specifically sub-coded parental influence into the expectancy-value model. Semi-structured, in- depth interviews, telephone were used for data collection and data were coded and analyzed withthe help of NVIVO-7 software. The study found that one or both of the participants' parents hadparticipated in competitive sports in high school or college, so parental role models had a significant impact on their sports participation.
- **Reddy (2009)** in his study tried to find out the socio-psychological differences between achieving, non-achieving, and non-participating female tribals in sports in Jharkhand state. The objective of the study was to study the socio-psychological factors, such as personality, aggressiveness, self-esteem, motivation for achievement, self-confidence, social adjustment, self-concept and locus of control, etc., which are effective in achieving achievement in women's tribalsports. The study involved 450 female tribals (150 sports achievers, 150 non-achievers, and 150non-participants) randomly selected from 28 institutions in the state of Jharkhand. In which socio-psychological variables of female tribals were assessed and analyzed by applying adescriptive statistics method (mean, standard deviation, standard error and ANOVA). The studyfound that there were no significant differences in selected socio-psychological variables amongtribal women achievers, non-achievers, and non-participants in sports.
- **Kirk (2012)** in a book, presented a brief advocacy to UNESCO Bangkok (Asian Pacific Regional Bureau for Education) on some innovative options for empowering girls and women through sports and physical education. The author described some of the issues affecting the participationof girls and women in sports and physical education, stating that- (1) While girls and women as agroup experience inequality in relation to boys and men, Not all women experience the same inequality, (2) issues related to gender norms and sexism remind us that biological determinism remains a strong, often unspoken influence against girls' participation in physical education. The author outlined some innovative options. Which states that considering the problem of participation of girls and women requires action at three broad levels (at the individual and societal levels) – (1) policy and strategies, (2) business, and (3) institutional.

- **Ahmed (2015)** in his research paper, described the obstacles, challenges, complications and their remedies for women's sports in India. The objective of the paper was to highlight the issues, challenges and solutions faced by female sports participants in Kashmir and India. In the study, aquestionnaire consisting of 30 open-ended questions was finalized and handed over to 70 expertslike female players, coaches, and officials and the data was collected from various research papers, research work published in magazines, internet and various discussions and debates. Theauthor analyzed that women have to face other obstacles like physical, psychological, family, social, cultural and religious, but apart from these problems, religious obstacles especially affectKashmiri girls in sports. It was suggested that campaigns for women's participation in sports should be encouraged in schools, colleges and universities. In the states where religion is becoming a hindrance, they should bring some options so that their women can also participate insports and live a healthy life.
- **Bruce (2015)** in his research paper, presented an assessment of the sociology of sport in the media and the representation of female players. The paper highlighted how media fashion gendered understandings of sport, resulting in the need for the development of sociological research on media with a particular focus on the representation of female players. The author revealed how surprisingly well-worn representational frameworks about women and sport persistin the culture. Which remains unbalanced despite the rapid increase in women's sports participation and achievements over the last 60 years. Furthermore, despite 30 years of activismand pressure on sports media to increase both the quality and quantity of media coverage, little has changed. The author stated that if we want to change media sport representations of women's sport (sexuality, disability, race, ethnicity and their intersections) then convincing sport media producers or consumers to do this is no easy task. Because they are unequal, discriminatory and unfairly conservative towards women's sports, multiple disabilities, gay rights. Instead, we should try to understand the emotional investment of people and cultures, in particular representations of women in sports.
- **Senne (2016)** in his research paper presented an overview of five topics related to gender equality and sports. These topics include (1) History and Title IX of gender equality in sports, (2)Gender equality in sports administration, (3) Gender equality issues in athletics, (4) Gender equality, sports participation and, (5) Gender equality in co-educational sports. The letter presented information about the importance of each gender equality topic, as well as any relevantsocial, ethical or legal concerns related

to them. The objective of the paper was to explore the history surrounding gender equality issues in sport, research the current issues facing women in sport and discuss the findings and present recommendations for further research in this area. Theauthor explained that the title IX was important in increasing women's participation in sports, but women still face scrutiny and stereotypes due to societal norms. The paper reported that both menand women have had positive colearning experiences through the rules and regulations of the game but that implicit biases against women were still observed. The author discussed that thereis always an opportunity for women to participate in sports. And the socially conditioned notionthat women should not participate in masculine sports because it makes them appear gay is ridiculed.

- **Kripalani (2016)** in his article presented his views on sports and Indian culture through popularfilms. The article highlighted what the world's largest film industry in terms of output tells us about sports and the importance of sports in national culture. The article featured six sports- related films and iconic Indian female athletes. In which it was analyzed about female athlete films that provide an Indian perspective and the special difficulties of female athletes in a conservative society. In these films, keeping women at the centre, the challenges faced by them insports have been shown. Like- film Chak De! India (2007) showed how a married female playerhas to be limited by the principles of her in-laws. The author discussed that trivializing women'sparticipation is the most disgusting attitude of sports officials. In the film Bend It Like Beckham(2002), the mothers of both Jess and Jules have the same mentality that their daughters should cook and behave like ladies instead of playing football. Similarly, in the film Mary Kom (2014),it was shown how Kom has to face difficulties like choosing between her sports career and her father. But despite so many obstacles, this female player did not give up and continued to struggleand brought glory to the country.
- **Mukesh (2018)** in his study, attempted to know the level of aspiration, sports achievement, motivation and confidence level among female kabaddi players of Haryana state. The objective of the study was to study the relationship between different levels of participation among femalekabaddi players in inter-university and state level championships. The study used factorial design, (3 factors- level of aspiration, sports achievement motivation and selfconfidence and, 2 groups- inter-university and state level female kabaddi players). In the study 250 female kabaddiplayers from Haryana state were selected and data was collected from the respondents by purposeful survey method, email, telephone, personal contact. The study found that female kabaddi players participating in state-level

championships had higher aspiration levels, sports achievement motivation and confidence levels compared to female kabaddi players participatingin inter-university championships.

- **Main, Rowe, Schoenberg, Gastin and Walsh (2018)** in their paper (in a workshop organized by Deakin University Australia in collaboration with the Australian High Commission and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) on emerging themes of challenges and solutions to women's sports in India was explained. The authors believed that women and girls face a specific category of participation that may hinder their participation in sport. Although the Indian government and commercial stakeholders have shown interest in the women's sports agenda from both a commercial and mass participation perspective, large-scale sports participation among Indian women and girls remains constrained. The authors explained that women lead, are competitive and have much to offer to the changing face of sport, yet women are still underrepresented as coaches, administrators and officials at all levels of competition globally.Their representation is low. The authors suggested that women's leadershipin sport requires collaborative work in four broad areas- (1) using sport as a medium for development, (2) promoting health, (3) improving educational achievement, and (4) increasing community safety.
- **Shidler and Wagstaff (2018)** in their research paper, highlighted the changing attitudes and exposure towards female athletes and women's sports. The objective of the paper was to identify increased exposure to women's sports affecting women's attitudes toward sports. In which, usingagenda setting theory, framing theory, exposure effect, an intervention was developed to promotewomen's sports to sports fans. The authors recruited college students from various psychology, sociology, and sports science programs at a Midwestern institution for the study. The participantswere divided in half for control and experimental conditions. However, of the 89 individuals whoentered the study, 58 watched highlight films of women's sports for 4 weeks. The study used 12 items Prejudicial Attitudes Survey to assess interest in and prejudice against women's sports. Thestudy found that the intervention reduced participants' prejudice against female athletes after 3 weeks. But this did not affect women's interest in sports. The authors clarified that future studies should focus on exposing participants to live action of women's sports rather than footage.
- **Weatherford, Block and Wagner (2018)** in their paper, described the complexity, universal challenges and their implications for women in sport. The purpose of the paper was to offer complexity as a theoretical lens through which to examine sport. The authors applied Barnett's discourse to discuss

some of the universal challenges of complexity related to sport and women'sexperience. In which globalization, digital technology, interpretation, competition, development of quality evaluation mechanism and participation access equal opportunity were specifically described. The paper found that the resounding negative effects of the complexity of sports can largely be mitigated in terms of attitudes, perceptions, actions, efforts, and resources (like data, money etc) whereas the matters of super complexity could not. The authors pointed out that the competitive nature of sport in a global society is not an indictment of men or a victimization of women, but is, rather, a social reality based on a foundation of deeply ingrained social norms andthe interpenetration of sport with the wider host society and its subsequent complexities.

- **Modi (2018)** in his paper, presented an explanation of the status of women in Indian sports. Thepaper stated that women players in sports are facing challenges, problems, social stigma and customs and traditions etc. for their excellent sports performance. The author mainly expressed his views on personal problems, social problems, customs and traditions for women in sports. The author pointed out that abuse of women is common in sports. Coaches, managers, promotersand organizers are usually men and some of them use their masculinity to exploit women. Regarding social problems, the author said that society does not recognize women as sport persons. Especially when she leaves her education or completes her education. The paper highlighted that customs and traditions affect women in sports, such as women are mostly not allowed to play after marriage and permission is also given by male members. The author said that there are problems in the lives of Indian women players, but they are always ready to fight.
- **Forsyth, Jones, Duval and Bambridge (2019)** in their research paper presented a study on opportunities and barriers for women to pursue study and employment in sport. The aim of the study was to examine the perceptions of sport and exercise career opportunities and barriers among women at different career stages. So as to provide some additional insight into the factors influencing the under-representation of women working and studying in sport in the United Kingdom. The study used an exploratory study design and conducted focus groups, in which 20 high school students, 8 university students and 7 undergraduate students studying sports and exercise were selected. The authors made it clear that all groups acknowledged gender discrimination in sport-related employment. The study found that some respondents viewed self-confidence and self-confidence as important for success but that external barriers and

token gender equality strategies limited progress. The authors noted that efforts are still needed to reduce gender disparity in sports-related careers and educational settings.

- **Emmonds, Heyward and Jones (2019)** research paper explored the challenges and implicationsof implementing research in women's sport. The authors tried to clarify that currently there is a lack of research related to sports science and sports medicine on elite female athletes. Thereby increasing the failure of female athletes to maximize their performance potential. The article highlights the challenges of applying the evidence base derived from male athletes to female athletes and female sporting contexts. The authors explained that when applying sports performance research to female athletes, the objective of the scientific research is to focus on theindependent variables (age, maturity status, a training intervention) on the dependent variable (sprint, performance ans). The effect should be checked. The authors stressed that appropriately qualified support staff (e.g. physiotherapy, sports science support) should be considered in addition to previously identified biological differences when supporting female athletes. The authors suggested that a framework for applied research should be implemented, progressing from descriptive research to implementation studies in actual sport settings, taking into account the context of female athletes.
- **Sherry and Rowe (2020)** focused on women's and girls' sports development in their book. The authors note that sport development for women and girls provides a theoretical and practical framework for those engaging in an emerging field of expertise. Applying a global lens to examine how women and girls experience, participate in, and excel in sport. The book contains acritical analysis of contemporary sports development to empower women and girls. It covers key topics such as health, education and sexual orientation and life-long partnerships, as well as international case studies. The authors question why sport development for women and girls requires greater global attention and reach. The authors have discussed the concept of two aspectsof sports development in the context of women, namely sports development (SD) and development through sports, or sports for development (SFD). The authors suggest that young women and girls need the support of family, friends, teachers and coaches to develop their sporting skills and abilities. For this there should be sports programs, teams and physical education sessions.
- **Chakraborty (2020)** in his project stated that the attitude towards women and women's sports inIndia is complex, contradictory and counter-intuitive. In which it was told that less than 30% of Indian

women play any sport. Under this project, when the attitudes towards women in sports were examined, it was found that one-third of Indians believed that female players are not actually as good as male players. And 37% of respondents said that female athletes are not feminine enough and 38% said that sports involving women are not as entertaining as sports involving men. Additionally, slightly more than one-third of respondents did not consider one ormore sports to be suitable for women, such as boxing, weightlifting, wrestling, kabaddi and motorsports. The top reason given was that it is not safe for women to play. 29% of respondentsbelieve that women are not strong enough to play sports. The author draws from one of the largest quantitative studies to show that real progress has been made in terms of women's and girls' attitudes towards sport, but some old stereotypes and stereotypes still prevail. The project reported that when it came to women's sports, only 34% of India's population reported hearing any news about it and only 18% claimed to have watched women's sports in person.

- **UNESCO (2021)** in an article focusing on the theme of building peace in the minds of men and women, presented ideas regarding women and sports. It was clarified that efforts to mainstream gender dimension in physical education and sports policies and programs are extremely important. The International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport affirms that all supervisors in physical education, physical activity and sport have equal opportunities toparticipate and be involved at decision-making levels. Whether it's for entertainment, health promotion or high performance purposes. Every girl and every woman has a right which must beactively implemented. UNESCO noted that mainstreaming the gender dimension into physical education and sports programs could be structured around three main types of interventions – (1) Physical education at all levels to encourage participation in physical activity and sports; to, (2)enforce the rights of girls and women, (2) protect participating girls from harassment and abuse and, (3) use sport to promote gender equality and empower girls and women. In this context, UNESCO works in partnership with national and international organizations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and promote the empowerment of women and girls and gender equality through sport.
- **D'Amico, Jahromi and Guinto (2021)** in their book presented a survey of women's participationin sports and physical education across Asia, from the Middle East and South Asia to the Asia- Pacific region. In which gender equality was emphasized. The book focused on anthropology, history, and

global understanding of the diversity, challenges, and achievements in the sporting lives of Asian women. The authors summarized the status of women in sports in 20 countries including Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, South Korea, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, etc. It was reported that women in Asia continue to face obstacles in achieving gender equality. The book described a glimpse of Asia and its diversity. In which it was said that Asian countries are very diverse in terms of culture, language, religion, caste and ethnicity and the impact of these socio-cultural diversities is visible in all fields including women's sports. The authors explained that addressing the topic of women and sport in Asia waschallenging, as data on women, sport and physical education were not published in many countries in the region. Apart from this, the biggest complication involved struggling during Covid-19.

- **YouGov (2021)** explained the growth in women's sports in its sports report. In which the popularity of women's and men's sports from all over the world and the interest in women's sports, inspirations and challenges for them were clarified. The article examined how women's sports are viewed around the world. This research was based on two contrary truths that - (1) women's sports are currently less popular than men's, (2) there is no reason for this to continue. Despite recent progress, women's sports offer great potential to marketers. The article is based onoriginal research. Based on inputs, the views of more than 15 million consumers (public) from 13 major sports markets around the world (from US, UK, Germany, Italy to India) were included.The article found that the men's game was more popular than the women's game in all 13 main markets surveyed. And 30% of respondents cite a lack of marketing for women's sports. While 27% said that they find it difficult to find women's sports to watch. The article examined the popularity of men's and women's sports around the world, with 40% of the public watching men's professional sports and 19% watching women's professional sports. In the context of India, the report noted that 46% of people follow men's professional sports, compared to 25% who follow women's professional sports.
- **Bowes, Lomax and Piasecki (2021)** in their paper, studied concerns about women's sports beforeand after covid-19. In which the authors aimed to document the perceptions of elite female players about the state of the women's game prior to covid-19 and its potential impact moving forward. The paper sampled elite female players aged 18-34 years, primarily from the United Kingdom, and collected 95

responses from an online, anonymous, qualitative questionnaire. In which the data were subjected to thematic analysis to determine key concerns and frequency data of responses were recorded quantitatively. The authors explained that the majority of female players believed that the women's game was on the path to progress. But some women describedit as a disparity compared to the men's game in terms of media coverage and finances. There weresome concerns that women's sports, with their subordinate status with fewer resources and support, would have serious implications post covid-19.

- **Sharkey (2022)** in his poster article, explained the challenges and disadvantages female athletesface during their professional careers. This is one of the harsh realities that female athletes have to endure in their professional athletic careers due to prejudice, discrimination, and current societal views. In this article, information was collected through digital commons and poster participation by Accounting Major, Honors Minor, graduate students from the West Campus West Building. It was reported that female athletes today still suffer from a toxic work culture resulting from gender-based pay gap, inadequate media coverage, inadequate resources and benefits, abuse and harassment. Which stops the progress of women's sports. The author explained that male athletes in basketball, golf, soccer, baseball and tennis earn anywhere from 15% to nearly 100% more than female athletes. Women's sports receive approximately 4% of total sports media coverage. The author reported about the toxic work culture for female athletesin sports, highlighting that 5 out of 10 NWSL teams faced challenges such as alleged sexual misconduct, verbal abuse, chauvinistic comments, and perpetuating a toxic work culture.
- **The Women's Sports Foundation (2023)** presented a review of the factors affecting girls' participation in sports in their article. The Women's Sports Foundation identified the key factors through more than 25 years of research. The article reported that by the age of 14, many girls areleaving sports at twice the rate as boys. Because there are problems like lack of physical education in school and college, limited opportunities to play sports and traveling to facilities through unsafe neighbourhoods. The article explained that girls drop out because female athletes continue to be discriminated against based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. And there may be lack of quality of experience among girls, lack of availabilityof trained coaches, lack of positive road models. It was reported that school sports budgets are being cut every day across the country and fewer opportunities in schools means families must pay to play in private programs. The

article recommended that girls need to stay in sports because it was observed that female high school athletes have a more positive body image than non-athletes.

- **Kaur (2023)** in her article, expressed her views on the contribution and development of women in Indian sports that the participation of women in sports has been quite commendable. And women have defied all odds and overcome challenges to play for the country. The best Indian female players like PT Usha, Saina Nehwal, Mary Kom, Sania Mirza are some of the lesser known but their achievements are no less than their eminent counterparts. Despite divisional hierarchy, the role and status of Indian women in sports is not only catching up with men, but surpassing them. The author explained that women still face gender equality, less media coverageand low wages which are prevalent globally. Even social media campaigns and federal lawsuits have been unable to address these disparities. The author pointed out that India has a long way to go in improving women's sports and needs more encouragement in terms of overall funding andsocial barriers.
- **Federico, Bowden and Hamalian (2023)** in their article, described gender inequality in sports and the challenges faced by female athletes. It noted that despite the progress made in women's sport, some major challenges remain, particularly equal pay, visibility and training conditions. The article included the narratives of female athletes competing in various national and international level sporting events. The authors recommended that, unlike the United States women's national team- which, through its fight for parity, succeeded in obtaining a collective agreement guaranteeing equal pay for male and female players in the national team- many international federations continue not to offer fair pay to their female athletes. Although some improvements have been made, women's salaries are still significantly lower than those of their male counterparts. The article analyzed that the training conditions of female football players are problematic and insufficient compared to their male counterparts. And women are found wandering from pitch to screen in search of popularity because the media often gives insufficient coverage to women's sporting events compared to their male counterparts. The authors also highlighted the persistent problem of more sexism in sports. It noted that sexist comments and unjustified criticism of female athletes' performances persist, helping to devalue their achievements and talents.

RESEARCH GAP

The studies conducted the field of sports are mainly physical education, pedagogical, psychological and medical in nature. There is a scarcity of sociological study in the area of sports. Most of the research studies

regarding sportswomen in sports is more oriented only towards their sports performance effects, cause-and-effect relationships with physical and other factors. There is limited reference seen on the opportunities, challenges, social impacts and issues for Indian sportswomen insports. That is why there is a need to study the above social research problem in the context of Indiansociety.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Historically, in most of the countries of the world including India, women have been discriminated inalmost all walks of life, whether it is society, politics, economy or any other area. Sport is one of thebest examples of such discrimination. Participation of women in sports in Indian society hastraditionally been lower due to socio-cultural, historical and other factors.

However, in recent years, various efforts have been made to promote women's participation and the development in sports. But on the other hand, sportswomen have been facing some problems like biological myths in sports, rigid social norms, limited opportunities, lack of cleanliness and women'ssafety in public sports training academies, limited women's sport events, violence against women, exploitation, sexual harassment etc. Due to these reasons sportswomen's performance and participation in sports events is negatively affected. In recent years, some issues have emerged relatedto sportswomen in sports and according to the Right to Information (RTI) data, between 2010 and 2020, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) received 45 complaints of sexual harassment in sports. In the area of Indian sports, the roles filled by women as president, secretary and treasurer are also veryless.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The proposed study "Sportswomen: Opportunities and Challenges (A Sociological Study of Agra District of Uttar Pradesh)" is a sociological study and will mainly be based on primary data, which will not only study problems but also the opportunities available to sportswomen such as sports facilities, career opportunities, women's safety, rights, programs and policies etc. Rather, it will alsopresent a picture of sportswomen's progress and their role in sports in the front of Indian society. If we see from the point of view of theoretical significance, sociology of sports is a comparatively newbranch of sociology. And its subject material is in the process of development. Therefore, it is need to conduct research studies on recently problems in Indian society. Thus, this study will also be important from a theoretical point of view. This study will be helpful in giving suggestions to removethe obstacles in the way of development and progress for sportswomen of various types of sports, which will include district, state, national and international level players. This study will also identifythe challenges faced by sportswomen to certain types of government sports members, policy &

program makers and NGOs who intend to make efforts for gender equality, development, and their welfare in the area of sports.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the social-economic background of sportswomen in Agra District.
- To study the impact of social media on sportswomen's participation in sports in Agra District.
- To identify the sport's opportunities for sportswomen in Agra District.
- To map out the challenges faced by sportswomen in sports in Agra District.
- To study the government policies and programs encouraging sportswomen in sports in AgraDistrict.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the social-economic background of sportswomen in Agra District?
- How social media is effecting sportswomen’s participation in sports in Agra District?
- What are the sport’s opportunities available for sportswomen in Agra District?
- What are the challenges faced by sportswomen in sports in Agra District?
- How far are the government policies and programs is effective in promoting sportswomen in sports?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Nature of the Study: The proposed research work will be quantitative and qualitative in nature.

Research Design: Descriptive and exploratory research design will be used.

Research Area: The area of proposed research will be Eklavya stadium and all the sport academies (which are affiliated with the District Sports Associations) of Agra district of Uttar Pradesh.

The Universe of the Study: The universe will be all the registered sportswomen in Eklavya stadiumand sport academics of Agra district.

Sample Design: In the proposed study, a stratified sampling method will be employed. There are 38sports academies and one sport stadium in Agra District. At first level 50% (20 academies) academies will be selected randomly. At second level 50% respondents (sportswomen) will be selected again randomly from all the sports activities. In this second level, there are two categories of sportswomen:
junior sportswomen (below 18) and senior sportswomen (18 and above). Junior sports women are a total of 688 in all sports, and 50% (349) will be selected. Senior sports women are a total of 246 in allsports, and 50% (125) will be selected. In this study a total of 474 sports women will be selected for participation in data collection. Random sampling will be used to select units at all levels.

Table 1 Number of Sports Women in Agra District

S.N.	Name of Sports	Junior Sports women (Below 18)	50% of junior sports women	Senior Sports women (18 andabove)	50% of Senior sports women
1.	Athletes	52	26	60	30
2.	Cricket	53	27	25	13
3.	Football	52	26	8	4
4.	Badminton	57	29	14	7
5.	Gymnastics	59	30	5	3
6.	Basketball	79	40	8	4
7.	Boxing	31	16	22	11
8.	Wrestling	20	10	20	10
9.	Taekwondo	57	29	7	4
10.	Fencing	15	8	-	-
11.	Kabaddi	19	10	12	6
12.	Volleyball	26	13	12	6
13.	Hockey	25	13	-	-
14.	Table Tennis	8	4	-	-
15.	Judo	6	3	2	1
16.	Lal-Tennis	9	5	2	1
17.	Shooting	6	3	-	-
18.	Powerlifting	8	4	6	3
19.	Squash	-	-	-	-
20.	Tarantaal (swimming pool)	106	53	25	13
21.	Gym	-	-	18	9
	Total	**688**	**349**	**246**	**125**

Unit of the Study: The unit of the proposed study will be a sportswoman (the district, state, nationaland international level) of Agra District.

Sources of the Data Collection: In the proposed study, both primary and secondary data will be collected. Primary data will be collected through the structured interview-schedule while secondary data will be collected from various research papers, research books, magazines, government documents, reports & records of sports associations, publications of government and non-governmentorganizations.

Methods of Data Collection: The interview-schedule, quasi participation, observation and case studies of the respondents will be conducted keeping in mind the objectives and hypothesis of the proposed study.

Techniques of the Data Collection: A detailed interview-schedule with the open and close questions will be used to collect primary data.

Data Collection Through Field Work: Primary data from the respondents will be collected throughfield work. Before field work, some administrative formalities will be completed as per requirementand facts will be collected in a suitable environment.

Pilot Testing: A pilot test of 10 sports women has been conducted to refine research questions and toensures

to capture the nuances of sports women's experiences.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics will be used to analyse data through statistical tools. The statistical tools used for data analysis will be include measures of central tendency (mean, median andmode). If qualitative data seems substantial, an appropriate software will be used for thematic analysis.

Mixed-Methods Integration: For quantitative findings, interview schedule, quasi participation and observation will be employed to collect quantitative data. In qualitative study case studies will be conducted of some cases and findings will be integrated.

Ethical Considerations: In the ethical considerations, voluntary participation and informed consent will be taken from the respondents before data collection. The identity of the respondents will be keptanonymous and the obtained information from them will be kept confidential, the possibilities of any harm will be communicated before data collection and the summary will be communicated, if they demand.

Policy Implication: This study will also be identify the challenges faced by sports women and will topresent recommendations for policy makers, administrators and community stakeholders.

TENTATIVE CHAPTERIZATION

Chapter 1:

- Introduction
- Research Methodology

Chapter 2:

- Socio-Economic Background of Sportswomen

Chapter 3:

- Impact of Social Media on Sportswomen’s Participation in Sports

Chapter 4:

- Opportunities for Sportswomen in Sports

Chapter 5:

- Challenges faced by Sportswomen in Sports

Chapter 6:

- Government Policies and Programs for Sportswomen in Sports

Chapter 7:

- Summary and Conclusion

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